

## Message Text

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10

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ADP-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

INR-09 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 PA-03 USIA-12 PRS-01

DOTE-00 NEA-10 RSR-01 /069 W  
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R 270305 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9208

INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

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EO 11652 N/A

TAGS: ETRN VS

SUBJECT: CRASH OF AIR VIETNAM DC-4, MARCH 19, 1973

REF: SAIGON 4636

MANILA FOR FAA

1. SUMMARY: THERE IS STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT CRASH OF AIR VIETNAM (AVN) DC-4 AIRCRAFT NEAR BAN ME THUOT ON MARCH 19 WAS CAUSED BY BOMB EXPLOSION OVER MAIN WINS SPAR. DELAYS ARE EXPECTED IN THE GVN'S ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION FINDING PROBABLY BECAUSE OF ITS DESIRE TO AVOID ADVERSE PUBLICITY AND HIGHER INSURANCE RATES.

2. FOLLOWING SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION RELATIVE TO CRASH OF AVN DC-4 HVNUI HAS BEEN SUPPLIED BY AVN'S UDAID ADVISOR:

A. PILOT KENNETH J. CARNEY AND COPILOT RALPH J. CURTIS WERE CONSIDERED HIGHLY SKILLED WITH NO HISTORY OF PERSONAL PROBLEM OR DIFFICULTIES.

B. AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE RECORD APPEARS ROUTINE. AIR VIETNAM MEETS ACCEPTABLE MAINTENANCE STANDARDS.

C. AT APPROXIMATELY 0630 ON MARCH 19, THE DAY OF CRASH, GVN MILITARY BOMB DISPOSAL PERSONNEL ARRIVED AT TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT AND BEGAN THOROUGH SEARCH OF AVN BOEING, WAS DUE TO DEPART

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FOR HONG KONG IN RESPONSE TO TELEPHONE CALL NOTIFYING GVN MILITARY SECURITY THAT THERE WAS BOMB ON AIRCRAFT. NO SEARCH WAS MADE OF DR-4 HVNUI DUE TO DEPART AT APPROXIMATELY SAME TIME ON IN- COUNTRY SCHEDULE.

F. AIRCRAFT RADIO TRANSMISSION OF HVNUI TO TOWER AT BAN ME THUOT WERE ROUTINE WITH NO INDICATION OF TROUBLE DURING APPROACH.

G. DC-4 EXPLODED IN AIR WHILE PREPARING TO LAND AND WAS ON BASE LEG TO AIRPORT. ONE U. S. WITNESS AT BAN ME THUOT AIRPORT HEARD LOUD EXPLOSION. AIRCRAFT FELL ABOUT 11 MILES AWAY FROM AIRPORT. TECHNICAL PERSONNEL WHO VISITED CRASH SITE CONCLUDE THAT AIRCRAFT WAS BLOWN APART IN AIR AND FELL IN SEPARATE PIECES. HOWEVER, DEBRIS IS IN SECURE AREA THAT WILL ALLOW WRECKAGE TO BE ANALYZED.

H. FROM WHAT IS KNOWN AT THIS TIME IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THERE IS STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT AIRCRAFT WAS DESTROYED BY BOMB PLACED IN CARGO CARRIED IN SECTION OF CABIN JUST FORWARD OF MAIN WING SPAR.

3. GVN DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION CALLED A MEETING ON MARCH 23 TO ORGANIZE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION. ANY REQUEST FOR FAA ASSISTANCE EXPECTED TO RESULT FROM THIS OR SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS.

4. AVN NOW EXPECTING INCREASED SURVEILLANCE OF ALL DEPARTING AIRCRAFT. SECURITY PROCEDURE INVOLVE USE OF COVERT POLICE SPREAD THROUGH LINE AND MAINTENANCE STAFF. BAGGAGE INSPECTION IS CONDUCTED OF BOTH CARRY- ON AND CHECKED. AND SPOT CHECKS AND HOLDING AIR FREIGHT FOR 24 HOURS BEFORE SHIPMENT ARE IN EFFECT. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN NOTICEABLE INCREASE IN GVN SECURITY ACTIVITY AT SAIGON'S AIRPORT, WEAKEST LINE IS AT OUTLYING STATIONS.

5. COMMENT: THERE MAY BE DELAYS IN GVN ARRIVING AT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION FINDING THAT COULD BE MOTIVATED BY DESIRE TO AVOID ADVERSE PUBLICITY AND HIGHER INSURANCE RATES. FINAL ACCIDENT REPORT OF AVN'S DC-4 CRASH AT LAI KHE OF SEPTEMBER 23, 1972 HAS NOT YET BEEN PUBLISHED. THAT AIRCRAFT LANDED IN HOSTILE TERRITORY. TESTIMONY OF SURVIVORS OF THAT CRASH INDICATED AIRCRAFT WAS POSSIBLY SHOT DOWN BY SA-7 ROCKET. ALTHOUGH ROCKET ATTACK CANNOT BE RULED OUT ON THIS LATEST CRASH, IT WOULD APPEAR TO HAVE REQUIRED WEAPON LARGER THAN SA-7. AVN DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS STATED THAT VNAF TRANSPORT WAS HIT BY

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ROCKET ON MARCH 19, 1973 IN SAME GENERAL AREAS BUT SUCCESSFULLY  
MABB IT BACK TO ITS BASE.  
BUNKER

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\*\*\* Current Handling Restrictions \*\*\* n/a

\*\*\* Current Classification \*\*\* LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** worrelsw  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
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**Line Count:** 122  
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**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
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**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 73 SAIGON 4636  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** worrelsw  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:** ANOMALY  
**Review Date:** 26 JUL 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <26-Jul-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <15-Aug-2001 by worrelsw>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** <DBA CORRECTED> srp 971230  
**Subject:** CRASH OF AIR VIETNAM DC-4, MARCH 19, 1973  
**TAGS:** ETRN, VS  
**To:** EB  
**SECSTATE WASHDC INFO MANILA**  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005